The Search for the Beautiful, the True, and the Good

Good morning, dear friends. Today is the 31st of July, 1998. We are in the New Hamlet, and today we are speaking in French.

Everywhere in France, when we go on a journey, we see churches. If you go into a church, you see Jesus Christ, you see the Virgin Mary. In Vietnam, when you go on a journey, you see only Buddhist temples, and every time you go into a Buddhist temple you can see the *Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara*. Avalokiteshvara is a person with many, many arms, maybe a hundred, a thousand arms. It's so strange to have a person with so many arms. Avalokiteshvara is someone who has the ability to listen deeply, in order to be able to understand. We call Avalokiteshvara a bodhisattva. A bodhisattva is a being, a person who has woken up, who is always there, awake. The Buddha is also a bodhisattva, because the Buddha is an awakened person. Sometimes we are also awakened persons, because sometimes we are very aware, truly present, with the capacity, the ability to see and understand, to love. Therefore, we also have the potential of being awakened beings, bodhisattvas or Buddhas. The word *bodhisattva* is made up of two parts, "bodhi" which means awakening, and "sattva", which means a living being. We have said that the Buddha Shakyamuni arrived at perfect awakening at the foot of a tree, and that tree is called the Bodhi Tree, the tree of awakening.

It may create a strange impression, when you go into a Buddhist temple and see someone sitting with a hundred or a thousand arms. You may wonder why should somebody need so many arms? I will tell you. This person has a lot of love, and the energy of love in her is very great. And that energy needs to be shown in action. When we love, we have to do something, and when the bodhisattva loves deeply, the bodhisattva looks for ways to act in order to show this love. Therefore, in order to do something, we need to act, and two arms are not enough. We need more than two arms. Look at your mommy. She has two arms. But sometimes she has so many things to do, she wishes she had five or six arms. So many things to look after: the housework is one thing, her child who is crying, her child who needs her, her husband, her family, her father, her mother, her friends, and society, which is asking for her attention as well, the people who are suffering in the world. Your mother has love in her heart, and she wants to do many things in order to express her love, but she has only two arms, and therefore she wishes she had more arms. In her there is a bodhisattva, an awakened being who loves and who wants to do so many things to help the world to suffer less.

Therefore you understand now why the bodhisattva has so many arms, and if you will come close you will see other things too. You will realize that in each hand of this bodhisattva there is something. Look carefully, and you will see that in each hand there is an eye in the palm. Look carefully, every hand of the bodhisattva has an eye in it. Why does it have an eye? Because, when you do something, when you act, you need to do it very carefully, to be sure that what you do makes the other person happy, and doesn't make the other person suffer. You want to make somebody happy. You really have the good heart, the good will, to do that. You really have love and want to do that. But if you are not careful enough, not mindful enough when you do it, you might make that other person suffer. Therefore, to love is to understand, and the eye in your hand is to be able to look and to understand. A hand is there, ready to do something. You are ready to do something to make somebody happy. The person before you may be your father, your mother, your little girl or your little boy, and this hand is made to make your love possible. You have one hand, and with that hand you are going to make the other person happy, the person you love. But sometimes, or often, although you want to make the other person happy, you make them suffer.

Daddy is someone who always wants to make his child happy, his daughter happy, his son happy, but sometimes father makes his son and daughter suffer, because he loves them, yet he doesn't understand them. He has his hand, his arm, ready to make his son or daughter happy, but maybe he does not have an eye in his hand, and that is why he has not understood the needs of his daughter or his son. If you love someone and you want to make him or her happy, you should look carefully before you do something. Put an eye in your hand, and look carefully at the person you want to help, and ask yourself this question: now, have I understood the person who is in front of me well enough? Am I acquainted with his suffering, with her difficulties? Do I know his or her deep wants and desires? These questions are very important. In Buddhism we learn to look deeply in order to be able to understand the difficulties, the suffering, which is there in the other person. We have to look deeply, carefully, in order to see the deep desires, the real desires, of the other person before we do something, or before we act. Therefore the practice of Buddhist meditation is to put an eye in your hand.

Now, let us try to look at our hands: our left hand and our right hand. And we can ask this question: is there an eye in my hand? You are not sure that the eye is there. You know that you love your mommy, you love your daddy, you know that your mother and your father love you; yet sometimes we do something to make each other suffer. Why? It's because understanding is not deep enough, there is not enough understanding, or maybe none at all. Buddhist meditation is to help us use the eye in our hand in order to understand. With understanding we can act, and that action will bring about a lot of happiness for the person we love.

The Buddha is someone who understands, and thanks to this understanding he is able to love and not make other people suffer. The Buddha, before becoming a Buddha, suffered when he was a child, suffered when he was a teenager. He was looking everywhere in order to be able to become an understanding person, and a loving person. According to the teaching of the Buddha, understanding is another word for love, because if we do not understand, we cannot really love. Therefore the essence of love is understanding. If you have the eye which has been handed down to you by the Buddha, with that eye you can practice looking deeply at the person you love. Looking like that you will see and you will understand, and this deep looking, this insight, this understanding, will bring about real love in you, and whatever you say, whatever you do, will bring about happiness in the other person. That is why, when we say the Three Refuges, we say, "I take refuge in the Buddha, the one who

shows me the way in this life. I take refuge in the Dharma, the way of understanding and love." You can say that the path of Buddhist meditation is the path of understanding and love.

I am going to offer you an exercise you can do. All of us suffer sometimes, grown-up people as well as children. When we suffer, we feel like crying, or feel like shouting. The children might do that, and the adults also feel like doing the same thing. Sometimes you might have seen your mommy crying all alone, because she is suffering. As her son or her daughter, or a young person, can you do something to help your mommy suffer less? That is practice. I am sure you have already tried to do something to help your mother suffer less. I have seen children who have come to their mommy when she is crying and take her hand, and with some very kind words, say "Mommy, don't cry, I am here for you. Mommy, don't cry anymore." There are children who can do that, and they do it all alone. No one has to tell them to do that. That is because the child has love in her, and she knows that when someone suffers, they need somebody else to be there with them, and then they will suffer less.

You know very well that when a child is suffering like the mother, the child cannot help the mother. But when the child is calm and happy, then that child can support the mother, and bring help to the mother. When you take a deep in-breath, "Breathing in I feel the in-breath, breathing out, I feel I am breathing out," you feel peaceful, and you feel you are really there for your mommy. And you can go towards your mother, and sit down close to her, and you can say to her, "Mommy, I know you are suffering, but I am here, so don't cry anymore." Your presence is very important for your mommy. Your presence is made out of love. If you can go a little bit further in understanding, I think you will be able to alleviate a lot of your mommy's suffering, that is, if you know how to use the eye that has been handed down to you by the Buddha, you will be able to understand why your mommy is crying, why she is suffering. A child, even when still very young, can understand his father's or his mother's suffering. If you are aware, if you notice what is happening in your family, if you can be really there with the people you love, then understanding will be possible.

Let us listen to the sound of the bell.

(Bell)

Here's what I'd like to tell you. Your presence, close to your mother, will be a big help. If you can show her that you have the ability to understand her suffering, that will help her a great deal, and will make her feel so much better. This understanding of yours is because you have been attentive, you have looked at your mommy carefully, but maybe you need to ask your mommy to help you understand her better. If you are interested, if you want your mommy to be happy, you will ask her questions in order to understand better how she suffers, what she worries about, what her difficulties are. "Mommy, why are you crying? Mommy, are you suffering inside? Can you tell me something that you have in your heart?" A child can always ask this kind of question, with a lot of care and love, and then a mother will feel like sharing her difficulties with her children, and that will help your understanding of your mother to grow, and your love for your mother will become deeper. You should remember that real love, deep love, is made out of understanding. Therefore, if you can cultivate understanding, you can develop your love, and that will help a great deal, that will make your mommy happy, or your daddy happy, or anyone you love happy.

Someone alone cannot lift a heavy suitcase on his or her own. We need someone to help us carry heavy luggage. If you have strength, if you have energy, you can give a hand to help lift up the suitcase and carry it to the car with the other person. You bring help to the other person. So, suffering, pain, is something we can help another person to carry. It is heavy. You can support somebody who is suffering with your moral strength, with your love. When someone needs your physical strength, you give him or her your physical strength, and when someone needs your spiritual strength, you can give your spiritual support. Someone who is suffering always needs your spiritual support, your understanding, your love, your real presence. That is the spiritual support which the other person is waiting for. When you suffer as a child, your mother always tries to be near you with her stability, her gentleness. She sits near you, and she says, "My dear child, I am here for you." She is there to give you her spiritual support. Human beings, like all other beings, suffer, and need others in order to suffer less. The practice of Buddhist meditation is to enable us to cultivate spiritual power, to be able to help others, and to help ourselves to suffer less.

When you hear the sound of the bell, the little children will stand up and bow to the Sangha before leaving the meditation hall.

(Bell)

My dear friends, we have all known love and suffered because of it. Maybe we haven't had the time to be able to look deeply into the nature of our love, to sum up what our love was about, to be able to understand what we did when we loved, and to understand why suffering arose from it. In Buddhism, the meaning of love is very deep, but also very clear, and it is necessary to have time to look deeply into the nature of our love, in order to be able to cultivate the elements which make true love.

All of us need to love. We need something beautiful, true and good, and we are looking for the beautiful, the true, and the good. We feel that these things don't exist in us, that what is really beautiful, what is really true, and what is really good, is not in us. Therefore we look for it, and sometimes we feel that we have found the object of our love. The person before us is a symbol of what is beautiful, of what is true, and we fall in love with that person. We have found the object of our love.

There are two things to be looked at. The first is the impression that this beauty, this truth, this goodness, is not in us. The second thing is that we feel that what we are looking for must be outside us, and therefore we feel that this person is the object of our love, and we feel satisfied and happy. That is the foundation of our love, but after a time we discover reality is not what we thought. The other person, the object of our love, shows herself or himself to be different from what we thought in the first place. We are disappointed, and we keep looking for the beautiful, the good, and the true.

Antoine de St. Exupery wrote something like this: "To love is not to look at each other, but to look in the same direction." But when we love each other, we have to look at each other. Because the other symbolizes beauty, truth, and goodness for us, we really need to look at each other. Beauty and truth seem to be one thing, goodness also. And when we love, we tend to see in

the other person the combination of the beautiful, the good and the true, and it gives us great pleasure to look. That is our happiness. But since we do not know the art of mindful living, we make mistakes in our daily lives, and internal formations arise in us and in the other. Pain, anger, jealousy, all these things show themselves bit by bit in ourselves, and in the other, the object of our love. We make the object of our love suffer, we do not understand them well enough, we are not patient enough, we are not tolerant enough, and we make them suffer. There is a slow change in each of us, and one day we find that looking at the other person no longer brings us happiness. In the beginning, when I looked at you, it made me happy. Just to look at you gave me so much happiness, but now, that is not true anymore. When I look at you I suffer. It is because you symbolize suffering for me. I am already suffering, but you are also suffering, so looking at suffering is not something pleasant. So both of us sign a contract: we won't look at each other any more, we will look in the same direction. And usually that direction is the television set, so we don't have to look at each other anymore.

Because we no longer see the truth, the beauty and the goodness in the other person, we are disappointed, and we are tempted to look for the beautiful, the good and true elsewhere in the universe, to find another person who can really offer us beauty, goodness and truth. We have traveled throughout the world looking for that person. Each one of us is like a pot without its lid, and we are travelling the world looking for our lid. The same thing happens in the spiritual realm. We are thirsty for truth, we are thirsty for goodness, for compassion, we are thirsty for spiritual beauty, and we are looking for these things. We meet someone, a spiritual teacher, a spiritual friend, and we feel so happy. To be able to sit there and look at the teacher, look at the spiritual friend, brings us a great deal of happiness, but this does not last very long, because the discovery may be a false discovery. We may have a wrong perception of this person who represents truth, goodness and beauty, just as in the realm of falling in love.

We thought we had found the ideal woman, the ideal man, in our life, but maybe it is a wrong perception, and in the spiritual realm it is the same thing. We think we have found someone who stands for truth, compassion and beauty, but once again, this can be a wrong perception on our part. When we have contemplated, when we have spent time with that teacher, that spiritual friend, we discover slowly that this person is not really the object of our love. We are disappointed in that person, and we keep looking in the cosmos. If you are lucky, you will meet a master, a spiritual teacher like the Buddha, and the teacher will say to you, "Look deeply in yourself, don't look for these things somewhere else." The true teacher is someone who helps you to discover again the real teacher in yourself.

When he woke up at the foot of the Bodhi Tree, the Buddha Shakyamuni said, "How strange-all beings possess in themselves the capacity to understand, the capacity to love, the capacity to be free. Everyone has that capacity, but everyone allows himself or herself to be carried away on the ocean of suffering. How strange." This is what the Buddha declared at the moment of his enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. He noticed that what we are looking for, day and night, is already there within oneself. What is beautiful, what is true, what is good, is already there in oneself. We can call it the Buddha-nature, the Buddhahood, the awakened nature, the true freedom, which is the foundation for all peace and happiness. This wonderful thing is in us, and a real teacher is someone who can help you to touch that thing in yourself, who helps give birth, to bring about the real teacher which already exists in yourself.

In the process of love, when you love someone, you can be lucky enough to recognize in the person you love the elements of beauty, of goodness, and of truth. If these elements are real, you have an opportunity to go back to yourself and rediscover the same things which already exist in you. It is possible that the person who is the object of your love also possesses within him or herself the elements of beauty, goodness and truth. Then you are lucky. And if you are lucky like this, you are happy to have this. Therefore you have an opportunity to rediscover the reality of these things in yourself. And the person who can help you to rediscover and touch the source of peace in yourself, the source of freedom, the source of happiness in yourself, is a spiritual friend. You are under the illusion that you don't have goodness, truth and beauty in yourself, and that is why you look for them in somebody else. But when you meet the Buddha, the Buddha will tell you that you have these things, you have this foundation of freedom, of peace, and of love within yourself.

These are not things you can obtain from outside of yourself. These are things that are already available within you, and our practice is to do everything we can in order to bring these things to the light, to bring freedom, fearlessness to the light. The person and the instrument which you use in order to find these things is the deep looking and the deep listening to yourself. In you, there are elements which make up your personality, and we can call these elements the five skandhas.

I am drawing an orange on the board, with five sections. The first section represents form or body, our physical body. The second section represents feelings; the third: perceptions; the fourth: mental formations; and the fifth: consciousness. The five elements are the territory of our being, and if we practice deep looking into these five elements, we will discover the true nature of our being. We will discover the true nature of our suffering, of our happiness, of our peace, of our fearlessness. The Buddha gave us very concrete ways to be able to come back to our own territory, in order to be able to look deeply, observe, embrace and understand these things, and to transform them. In our daily lives we have the habit of neglecting and running away from this territory of the five skandhas. We always want to run away from ourselves, from our territory. That is because we have the feeling that if we come back to our territory, we will have to face the suffering that is there.

Each one of us is a king or a queen, reigning over the territory of the five skandhas, but we are not responsible kings or queens-we have abandoned our territory. We have tried to run away from our territory every day. That is because we have allowed things to get worse. We have allowed war to happen, we have allowed conflicts and disorder to arise in our territory. In the past we did not practice, we did not take care of our territory. That is why there are so many conflicts, so much disorder and suffering in our territory. We have the feeling that if we were to go back to our territory, we would have to face so many difficulties, so many problems. Our daily practice, therefore, is to run away from this territory. Every time we have one or two hours, fifteen minutes, we don't use this time to come back to ourselves in order to restore some harmony and well being in our territory. We try to forget about out territory. We use the television, newspapers, music, conversation, the telephone, in

order to run away from the reality of our five skandhas. I'm suffering too much. I have too many problems. I don't want to go back to them any more. That is the situation of so many of us.

The Buddha looks at us with a great deal of understanding and compassion, and he says, "My dear child, you have to go back to these things, and put things in order there." And how does the Buddha tell us to do this? We have to cultivate the energy of right mindfulness, and doing that we will have the strength to go back to ourselves. Right mindfulness is something concrete. When we practice walking meditation, making steps in mindfulness, establishing ourselves in the present moment, when we are surrounded by the Sangha, and we practice mindful walking, we can make solid steps, peaceful steps, which will bring us back to the present moment. Each step will be able to bring about the energy of mindfulness. When we are seated, and we are following our breathing, breathing deeply, mindfully, aware of in-breath, aware of out-breath, we also cultivate the energy of mindfulness. When we are sitting with the Sangha to have a meal in mindfulness, we invest all our being in the present moment, and we eat, being aware of our food and our community of practice. We cultivate the energy of mindfulness, and a few days practicing like that can increase the energy of mindfulness in you, and that will help you, protect you, and give you courage in order to go back to yourself, to see what is there, and embrace what is there in the territory of the five skandhas.

There are feelings, painful feelings; there are emotions, strong emotions; there are perceptions which trouble us, which agitate us. We have to go back to all these things, and offer our real presence to all these things, and be able to embrace them all. "Darling, I am here for you; I have come back; I am going to take care of you." This is what we do with all our emotions, all our feelings and all our perceptions. There are perceptions which trouble us, which make us afraid. There are strong emotions which can trouble us, but if we are armed with the energy of mindfulness, we can return to them.

What is the energy of mindfulness? It is the energy of the Buddha. A Buddha is someone who is made of mindfulness, and mindfulness is something which can be cultivated. In a practice center, that is what we are doing. We are cultivating the energy of mindfulness while we walk, while we breathe, while we eat, while we work. When we are in the kitchen, we practice mindfulness as we work. When we are in the meditation hall we practice mindfulness as we sit and breathe. When we are washing our clothes, it is an opportunity to cultivate the energy of mindfulness. We do all these things with the support and the help of the whole community. One day, two days, ten days in a practice center, that is the time for cultivating the energy of mindfulness which will protect you, and make you strong, so that you can embrace what is there in you.

(Bell)

In the *Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing*, the Buddha gives us very concrete exercises to take care of all that is in the territory of the five skandhas. I have translated this sutra. It is available in French (and in English) with commentaries, and with suggestions for practice and exercises. The first four exercises are to take care of our body, our physical body, which also suffers. This little book is available, please use it in order to begin your practice with mindful breathing. "Breathing in, I am aware that this is an in-breath. Breathing out, I am aware that this is an out-breath." This is the first exercise of mindful breathing. It is the first step we make when we come back to ourselves. The first thing you touch when you come back to yourself is your breathing. "Breathing in, I know this is an in-breath; breathing out, I know this is an out-breath." This is the correct approach.

With the energy of mindfulness we embrace our breathing, our in-breath. "I breathe in, and I know the in-breath is here; I know you are there, out-breath." This is the way to embrace, to love, to recognize, to make peace, to reconcile. Make peace with your breathing first of all, that is what the Buddha suggests, and it is very pleasant to do. Just breathe mindfully. It is nourishing and healing. You have lungs, you have a nose, and you have the ability to breathe, to breathe in and to breathe out. The air is good, or good enough, and therefore this practice is a pleasant experience. And the Buddha recommends that we do this practice. He says that the Dharma is lovely in the beginning, lovely in the middle, and lovely at the end. It means that meditation must not be a hard labor. Meditation should be something pleasant. Whether it's walking or sitting, everything should be pleasant, an enjoyable experience.

Last week we began with four breathings offered to us by the Buddha: "I breathe in, I breathe out" is the first exercise; "in, out." The second exercise, "I breathe in and I am aware and I am aware of the whole length of my in-breath; I breathe out, and I am aware of the whole length of my out-breath." That is the practice of following our breathing. The first exercise is to identify the in-breath as an in-breath, and the out-breath as an out-breath. The second exercise is to follow the in-breath and the out-breath for all its length. The third exercise: "Breathing in, I am aware of my whole physical body." Now we have really come back to the first element of our personality, our body. With the energy of our mindfulness, we have come back and we have embraced our whole physical body. "Breathing in, I am aware of my whole physical body; breathing out, I smile to my physical body." This is a practice of love, a practice of reconciliation. First of all, with your breathing, and then with your physical body, the whole of your body. It's a very methodical way of doing things. In the sitting position, in the lying position, embrace your physical body tenderly, with the energy of mindfulness, and the conscious breathing will continue to give rise to the energy of mindfulness. If you continue to breathe mindfully like this, the energy of mindfulness will continue to be generated, and you will have something to help you embrace your physical body.

There is suffering in your physical body. There is war and disorder in your physical body, therefore you need to return to this body, to embrace it, and with mindful breathing you will pacify the war and the trouble in your body. The fourth exercise: "I breathe in, and I make the activities of my physical body calm." There has been stress, pain, and disharmony in my physical body, and now I am conscious of this pain, and with my in-breath and my out-breath I embrace this physical body and I begin to pacify the suffering of my body. Do you see how compassionate the Buddha is when he gives us this teaching? The first four breathings are all directed to your body, to recognize your body, to embrace your body, and lessen the suffering of your body, to alleviate the suffering of your body.

The next four exercises are directed to feelings. You have embraced your physical body, you have made a reconciliation with

your physical body, you have calmed the pain in your physical body; now, you have to go more deeply into the house of your being, and what you find are the feelings. There is a river of feelings flowing day and night in us, and each drop of water in that river is a feeling. A feeling is born like that, and remains for a time, and disappears. And other feelings are born, remain and disappear: a river of sensations which flows day and night. Now you have come back, and sitting on the bank of the river you contemplate, you embrace, you recognize each feeling. This is what the Buddha has told us to do, and it corresponds exactly to the method which I gave you yesterday morning. It means you should try to be in touch with positive things first of all--things that are going well in you--you should recognize them, you should identify them, you should touch them.

"Breathing in, I feel joy in myself. Breathing out, I smile to the joy in myself." This is the fifth exercise: touching joy. And the sixth is happiness. There is a difference between joy and happiness in Buddhism. In Pali the word for joy is *piti*, and the word for happiness is *sukha*. Joy is something which is born when we recognize what is beautiful and in good condition, and we recognize what brings us good news. Imagine that we are travelers in the desert, and we are thirsty, we are suffering, and suddenly we notice an oasis, and we can see cool water. Seeing this water makes us feel happy. We haven't drunk the water yet, but just seeing the water is enough to make us happy. And when we arrive in the oasis and we begin to drink the water, then we have happiness. Joy is different from happiness. In the joy there is still some excitement, but in happiness there is little or no excitement. You are blessed by happiness. That which brings about happiness and joy is concentration, and distancing, leaving behind, abandoning.

Abandoning and concentration are what bring about joy and happiness. Abandoning means "leaving behind." Joy is something possible when we can leave certain things behind. And the ability to leave things behind has to be practiced. Imagine that you have been in Paris for several weeks, and you have suffered from the noise and the pollution, and other things like that, which can be found in all big cities. Now you have the opportunity to leave Paris, you take your car, and you leave the city. And when you begin to see hills and fields, you feel great joy. You have been able to leave the city behind. If you had not been able to leave the city behind, you would not have felt this joy. This joy is the freedom of entering the countryside. In our daily lives there are things which cling to you and make you suffer, and you say, "If only I could disassociate myself from these things, then I would be happy." There are things we can disassociate ourselves from every day, to make us happy. These things are not useful for us, these are things which encumber us, which take away space and freedom from us, and take away our joy. In spite of this, we have allowed these things to cling to us. It's a foolish thing, but everybody does it. Therefore we have to learn how to rid ourselves of these things, and that is called "leaving behind," and the happiness of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and those amongst us who are free, comes from leaving behind. That is what the Buddha has taught.

If you can learn how to leave behind and cultivate freedom, you will have happiness. Are you brave enough to do this? Your courage will come from your deep looking. If you understand, you will see that these things which cling to you have always made you suffer, and therefore you will have the courage to let them go. These may be relationships which make you suffer, which pull you down-you have to be intelligent. You are intelligent, but you haven't had enough time to look deeply, and therefore you haven't had enough courage to let go. Letting go will be happiness.

Before you left the city to come to Plum Village, you had to make an effort, you had to make a decision. Leaving everything behind to come to Plum Village demands some courage, is that not so? And when you come to Plum Village, you feel happy, you feel free of the things you left behind. You can walk as a free person, without thinking about arriving. You can arrive in every step. That is a new way of living. You no longer feel tied to the future. You can taste what life is like in the here and now, and the joy of this is possible only when you have the courage to let go, to leave behind. In the Chinese it is described as the joy which is born from leaving behind, the happiness born from concentration.

Concentration gives us much happiness also. Without concentration, there is no happiness. If you cannot concentrate, you cannot touch the blue sky deeply. The blue sky is something wonderful. The sun rising, the sun setting, the beautiful face of your child, all these things ask for concentration. When you are concentrated, you can touch more deeply, you can recognize the presence of the child, of the sky. All is there, nature is there. These wonderful things are there, available to us. Therefore, concentration allows us to be there in the here and the now in order to be able to enter into deep contact with all that is beautiful, all that is refreshing, all that is healing, which is all that is available in the here and the now. Without concentration, we will continue to turn and turn around, to run around, and there will be no depth in daily life. But with concentration, you can learn to live each moment of your daily life deeply.

If you have half an hour, you can use that half-hour to eat an orange. Much happiness can come from eating an orange, if you know how to do it with letting go, leaving behind, and concentration. The orange is in your left hand. You look at it. An orange is something very wonderful, a true miracle. The orange tree spent months in making this orange, with the help of the sun, the wind, and the rain. Do we not have time to touch this miracle, this wonderful thing called an orange? Do you have the freedom to be able to be there for the orange for half an hour? Can you leave behind all your worries, all your anguish, all your anger, and your plans? If you can, you will be a free person, and that is what is meant by leaving behind. You rid yourself of all these things in order to be able to become a free person, in order to be able to be there with the orange. Look, and you will penetrate deeply the reality of the orange.

Once I was in the United States with a group of friends, and somebody gave us some oranges, so we had an "orange meditation," and it took us an hour. We spent an hour with the orange, and it was a very happy time. I instructed people in how to eat an orange in mindfulness. With leaving behind, you can liberate yourself, and you can enter into deep contact with this wonderful thing that we call an orange. And with our concentration we can live deeply this wonderful moment: we are really there, and the orange is also really there. If you are not really there, the orange is only an illusion. Therefore, the practice is to make yourself real.

In this hour of practice with the orange, happiness is real, and that happiness nourishes us, heals us, and brings about transformation in us. The procedure of transformation is pleasant. It is not a hard labor, this leaving behind, this concentrating,

is a joy and a happiness. To be on your cushion, or walking with the Sangha, or being together, touching the earth deeply, this always makes us happy. And what is the orange, what does it represent? It represents life, the wonders of life, and when you are not there with the orange, you will not be with your child, and your child is a miracle of life also. Or your friend, or the tree in the garden-they are also miracles of life. Without leaving behind, without concentration, there will not be joy, there will not be happiness. Joy and happiness are available to us; it depends on us and on our freedom, so free yourself. And conscious breathing is the beginning of freedom.

See the Buddha: he is a cook; he gives us good food, which is able to heal and nourish us. There is so much compassion in his way of teaching. "Breathing in, I feel joy; breathing out, I feel joy…" with these two aspects, leaving behind and concentration.

Seventh exercise: "Breathing in, I am aware of my feeling." It may be an unpleasant feeling, a painful feeling that you have within. This breathing is to recognize that we have this pain. This pain has been waiting for us, and now we have come back home to it. And we say to it, "My dear, I am here for you." And like a mother, with a lot of tenderness and compassion, you take the child in your arms, and that is how you breathe in and breathe out, embracing the feeling of pain that is in you. "My dear, I am here for you. Breathing in I am aware of the feeling, breathing out I calm the feeling."

The eighth breathing is calming the feeling. "Breathing in, I calm my feeling, breathing out, I calm my feeling." You don't have to do anything. All you do is embrace, hold your suffering in your arms, and your "arms" here means the energy of your mindfulness. Pain is an area of energy, and it means the energies blocked. Mindfulness is also a source of energy, which envelops, surrounds the painful energy, and transforms it. So if you are able to look at, to read, to study the teaching of the Buddha on mindful breathing, you will see that that first eight breathings are to take care of your body and your feelings. The other breathings will allow us to embrace our mental formations, our perceptions, and our consciousness, in order to transform them and to understand them, in order to restore harmony and peace, which is possible in us, as in the case of the wave.

The wave is also the water. If you take away the wave, there won't be any water. The water can be the wave, and the water can also be calm. When the water is calm, it can reflect things as they are. Therefore peace is possible; peace, happiness, solidity, freedom…all these things are possible. Although there is suffering in the five skandhas, if we know how to deal with these things, how to take care of these five elements, we can give rise to peace, fearlessness, stability and happiness in ourselves. We will continue this the day after tomorrow.

(Three bells)

(End of talk)